

National Office for Professional Standards

REPORTING ABUSE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU FIRST CONTACT US

The National Office for Professional Standards is responsible for ensuring that all complaints of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct by clergy or members of a religious order are dealt with in accordance with a protocol called *Te Houhanga Rongo - A Path to Healing*.

The experience of victims and survivors of abuse is that taking the first steps to come forward to report abuse, to ask for help and support, is often the hardest thing to do. In responding to complaints of abuse we aim to offer a process which recognises this and ensures that each person is welcomed and heard.

The phone contact details of Virginia, Jacinta and Clodagh at the National Office for Professional Standards are:

Phone: 0800 114 622 or 03 365 1993

The 0800 number is **not** a 24-hour help-line, but provides a toll-free option. The office hours are Monday-Friday 9am – 3pm; however, if we are not available please leave your name and contact details on our answering service and we will return your call. Or you can contact us via email or post:

Email: prof.standards@nzcbc.org.nz	Write to: National Office for Professional Standards PO Box 10199 Phillipstown Christchurch
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The first approach may be made by someone acting on your behalf; for example an advocate, counsellor, or lawyer. In this first contact we simply want to find out:

- Your name, date of birth and contact details
- The type of abuse suffered
- The name of the accused person (if known)
- The date or time frame of offending
- The parish/school/area the offending took place
- If you require any translation assistance

Telling your whole story can be very traumatic and is not necessary at this early stage. The information above will enable us to undertake an initial assessment of the complaint to confirm whether it is the role of our office to investigate the complaint, or whether it is to be referred to a diocese or religious congregation to respond. If the complaint is within the scope of *Te Houhanga Rongo - A Path to Healing*, we will appoint an investigator and arrange for a face-to-face opportunity for your story to be heard. This meeting can include any support person.

You have the right to report your complaint to the NZ Police at any stage. If this occurs, we suspend our investigation until the police investigation is completed. If the complaint identifies a level of risk to other people it may be necessary for us to report this to the police.

[For more information about what happens once an investigator is appointed, please do not hesitate to contact us – we would welcome the opportunity to explain our process to you.](#)